



Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers

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February 17, 2004

Surface Transportation Board  
Office of the Secretary  
1925 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: No. AB-859 Sub-No 1X

Dear Sir/Madam:

The Delaware Valley Association of Rail Passengers (DVARP) opposes the intention to abandon rail service on a 3.7 mile section of rail right-of-way in Northampton County, Pennsylvania. This right-of-way is owned by Norfolk Southern Railway Company.

DVARP is a non-profit, member-based, transit advocacy organization with 501(c)(3) status. We represent the interests of present and potential railroad and rail transit passengers of southeastern Pennsylvania and nearby areas. We have members who reside in Northampton County. We are aware of and join in the Bucks County TMA's opposition to the abandonment.

We have been interested in and have taken part in discussions relating to the reinstatement of commuter rail service on an existing rail right-of-way from Norristown, PA to Quakertown, PA. The 3.7 mile section of rail right-of-way in the Notice of Intent to Abandon is part of the line on which service could be restored, and is about 8 miles north of Quakertown. While it is true that SEPTA had the right of first refusal, this right was not exercised due to a fiscal crisis that SEPTA faced in 2003 and continues to face in 2004. Furthermore, it was thought at the time that alternative alignments existed.

However, at least a portion of the right-of-way at issue represents the only existing link between Philadelphia and the Allentown/Bethlehem area, a.k.a. Lehigh Valley. Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley are, respectively, the first and third largest metropolitan regions in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. **While there may be alternate rights-of-way through the old Bethlehem Steel site between, approximately, milepost 54 and 56.7, there is only one right-of-way between the North end of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) property at milepost 53 and milepost 54, approximately.**

The proposed abandonment would eliminate the possibility of restoring commuter rail service through this area. We strongly recommend that the line remain intact. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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Public Record

Sincerely,

Donald Nigro  
President

cc: James R. Paschall, Norfolk Southern Corporation